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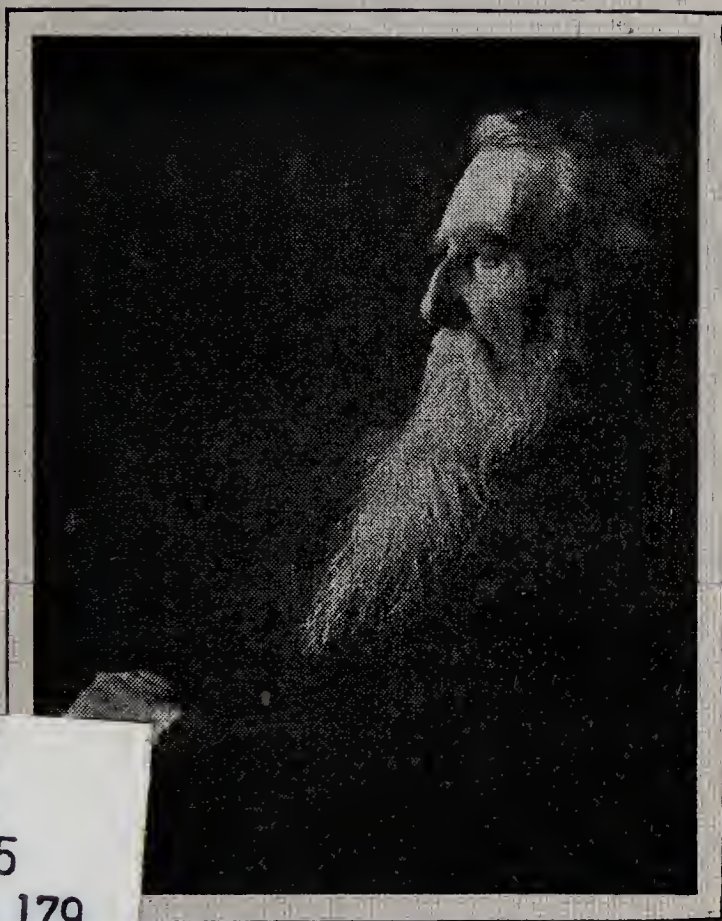
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# JOHN RUSKIN

## AND SOCIAL ETHICS

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# JOHN RUSKIN AND SOCIAL ETHICS - - -

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# JOHN RUSKIN AND SOCIAL ETHICS.

(1819—1900.)

## Introductory.

RUSKIN not only denied that he was a Socialist: he asserted that the Socialistic ideal of human equality was unattainable and undesirable. He even wrote of "liberty and equality," that he detested the one, and denied the possibility of the other ("Time and Tide," chap. xxii, § 141). He proclaimed himself a "violent Tory of the old school," and an "Illiberal," and it is certain that, for a clear exposition of Socialistic doctrine, we must look elsewhere than in the volumes of Ruskin.\* Moreover, economists tell us that many of his theories are unsound. and that his attempts to work them out in detail are as unpractical as the ill-starred Guild of St. George.

It is probably true that any movement to remodel society precisely on the lines he laid down would be foredoomed to failure. It is at least equally true that to ignore his teaching becomes every day more impossible and disastrous. For Ruskin, who is accepted neither by Socialist nor by practical political economist, nevertheless strikes at the very root-disease of modern "civilisation" when he condemns commercialism and the struggle for mere material possessions, showing that life is the only true wealth, and that the richest man is he whose existence is the most useful, many-sided and helpful.

Ruskin himself says "that in a science dealing with so subtle elements as those of human nature, it is only possible to answer for the final truth of principles, not for the direct success of plans; and that in the best of these last, what can be immediately accomplished is always questionable, and what can be finally accomplished inconceivable." ("Unto this Last," Preface). Though we may frequently refuse to accept the special application of Ruskin's principles; though in a good many instances we are forced to regret that those applications were ever made, yet concerning the principles themselves there can be but one opinion. They may be summed up in his own statement that "Life without Industry is Guilt; Industry without Art is Brutality" ("Lectures on Art," III).

Whatever the particular phase of human activity which he might be considering, Ruskin revealed its relation to the ultimate truth and meaning of life. He showed, and in no narrow didactic spirit, the necessary connection between art and ethics; he traced the links between morals and sociology, and pointed out that scientific economics

\* See, on the other hand, Collingwood's "Life of Ruskin," Book III, chap. iv. "For when, long after 'Fors' had been written, Ruskin found other writers advocating the same principles and calling themselves Socialists, he said that he too was a Socialist" (and *ante*, p. 242. 1/- edition).



are inevitably bound up with the reform of the individual. Above all, he proved incontrovertibly that increased prosperity, whether national or individual, industrial or social, must go hand in hand with increased capacity and with a desire for a prosperity and advance which are above and beyond all these. "It is open, I repeat, to serious question . . . whether, among national manufactures, that of Souls of a good quality may not at last turn out a quite leadingly lucrative one." In all the many forms of teaching which he undertook, this manufacture of souls, this awakening of the spiritual in the material, was John Ruskin's chief end and aim. In art and in economics he applied the same touchstone, for it was his distinction to see life always as a whole and to refuse to divide it into the watertight compartments beloved of specialists.

### Childhood and Early Life.

Ruskin was of opinion that the study of a man's work should begin with an attempt to become familiar with his life and character, more especially as these were shaped and developed in his childhood. Thus, in his autobiography, "Præterita," he dwells in great and loving detail on his early life and upbringing, but discontinues the story soon after the completion of "Stones of Venice," and before the beginning of his campaign of social reform. A similar disproportion may, therefore, be excused in a tract which essays only to give a brief account of his aims in that campaign. But these cannot justly be appraised unless we understand something of the man who devoted the best of himself to their achievement, and realise something of his passionate concentration, his intense emotional nature, and of his "unusual moral principle and self-command."

John Ruskin was born, of Scottish parentage, at 54 Hunter Street, Brunswick Square, W.C., on February 8th, 1819. His father was a well-to-do wine-merchant, hard-working, energetic and successful in business, and "entirely honest," as his son later on described him, in words of praise which meant much coming from that source. He was also cultured and intelligent, with a real appreciation of scenery and travel, and a lover of art and literature. His wife, who was some years older than her husband, held a more puritanical view of life, and it was she who took the lead in the early upbringing of their precocious and not very robust little son. Her methods were as stern as they were affectionate and careful; he was allowed no toys but a cart and a ball and two boxes of well-cut wooden bricks; he had few or no playmates, and he was taught to rely on himself for amusement and occupation. "I . . . could pass my days contentedly in tracing the squares and comparing the colours of my carpet. . . . The carpet, and what patterns I could find in bed-covers, dresses, or wall-papers to be examined, were my chief resources." It sounds a lonely and self-centred life for a small boy, though doubtless it resulted in the powers of concentration and accurate observation which were to distinguish him later on.

Ruskin, in his own summary of the "blessings" of his childhood, puts first the fact that he had never heard his parents' voices raised in anger, nor seen any disorder in any household matter. Thus, he early learned "the perfect meaning of Peace, in thought, act, and word." On the other hand, he complains that he had no one to love or assist or thank, and nothing to endure. "My strength was never exercised, my patience never tried, and my courage never fortified."

In 1823, his parents moved to Herne Hill, and, from this time onwards, his outdoor recollections were of the garden where he played and of the surrounding country in which he delighted. It is tempting to linger over these early days, and to trace in the child the father of the man. Narrow and conventional as was his home in many ways, it was in other respects unusually cultured and intellectual. From his babyhood, long before he was supposed to care to listen, he heard great books read aloud by his parents for their own amusement—the eighteenth-century novelists and Byron, as well as the authors usually considered more suited to the family circle. Above all, his imagination was awakened by the yearly journeys all over Great Britain, and, later, on the Continent, which gave him his first introduction to the beauties of nature. His father "travelled" for his own orders, and wife and child accompanied him on the pilgrimages, which combined pleasure and sight-seeing with business. The happy weeks spent on these driving tours gave Ruskin just the education he needed. Old buildings stirred his interest in the past ; beautiful scenery and, above all, mountains, stimulated the love of nature which, at the age of three and a half, already led him to ask for a background of "blue hills" when his portrait was painted by Northcote. A little later he was enquiring of what the mountains were made, and soon he was poring over minerals, beginning his study of geology, and pulling to pieces every flower he could pluck, until he knew "all that could be seen of it with child's eyes."

Very early in life he learned, after his own fashion, to read and write, and he soon began to imitate his father by keeping a journal, in which every detail of his travels was set down. Thus, naturally, the habit of descriptive writing was acquired. Doubtless, Ruskin was right in supposing that his extraordinary command of rhythm and language was largely due to his mother's training. From the time he could read, until he was fourteen, and about to start on his first continental journey (1833), morning after morning, year by year, they read together two or three chapters of the Bible, completing the whole, from the first verse of Genesis to the last verse of the Apocalypse, only to begin once more at the beginning. Every day, too, the child committed to memory some verses of the Bible and of the Scottish paraphrases, and was compelled to repeat them over and over again until not a syllable was missed or misplaced, not a sentence wrongly accented. To this daily discipline he rightly attributed "the best part of his taste in literature," his appreciation of the music of words, and also his capacity for taking pains.

Pope's Homer, Walter Scott's poems and novels, "Robinson

Crusoe," "Don Quixote" and "Pilgrim's Progress," were his other "text-books" of literature, but these from choice, not compulsion.

Human companions he had few: his Scotch cousins, one of whom became his adopted sister, his cousins at Croydon and a boy friend at Herne Hill, are all that he mentions, and we know that he was not allowed out except under supervision, that he was not sent to school until he was fourteen, and then only to a small private class to which every day he was personally conducted by his father, and where he remained less than two years. There is no doubt that he suffered from this mode of upbringing in so self-contained a household. He was over-fostered and over-cared for, "safe against ridicule in his conceit," his "father and mother in their hearts caring for nobody in the world but me." He developed prematurely in many directions; he wrote too much, both of prose and verse; he exerted his mind more than was wholesome, and he became too self-opinionated.

The first disturbance in his sheltered life came when, somewhere about the age of seventeen, he fell in love with the young daughter of his father's French partner, Mr. Domecq. The passion was not requited, and four years later, in 1840, the girl married Baron Duquesne. The effect of the disappointment on a lad of Ruskin's temperament was great. "Men capable of the highest imaginative passion are always tossed on fiery waves by it," he writes; and again, in referring to the evil consequences of his isolated childhood, "when affection did come, it came with violence utterly rampant and unmanageable, at least by me, who never before had anything to manage." We know that the young man broke down in health and spirit as a result of this unfortunate experience, which darkened several years of his life.

Meanwhile he had been prepared for Oxford at King's College, London, and, in 1836, he matriculated as a gentleman-commoner at Christ Church, going into residence in the following January. Already he had made his appearance as the defender of Turner in *Blackwood's Magazine* (1836), and earlier than this he had seen his verses in print in *Friendship's Offering*. But his regular academic studies were less advanced, and his lack of accurate scholarship was a drawback to him at college, and a hindrance all his life. Yet he did well at Oxford, not only taking the Newdigate Prize for English Verse as he had intended, but winning a reputation as a writer and student, and raising hopes that he would secure a first class. Then at the critical point, when all seemed going well, and in spite of the care of his mother, who had followed him up to Oxford in order to watch over him, the crash came and his health broke down. For two years he was more or less an invalid, threatened with permanent lung trouble. Foreign travel restored his health, but all idea of an honours degree had to be abandoned. In 1841 he went up for the pass examination and did so well that he was granted the highest distinction possible—an honorary double fourth class in honours—always a most unusual, and nowadays an impossible, reward of merit.



### Ruskin as Art Critic.

By this time (1841-2) his ill-health, combined with his interest in art, changed his plans for the future, and Ruskin finally abandoned the idea of taking Holy Orders. He settled down to serious art study, and it was in this same year that an attempt to sketch a tree-stem with ivy upon it, forced upon him the consciousness of his vocation. Suddenly he realized that it was his mission to preach the gospel of sincerity in art, "to tell the world," in the words of Mr. Collingwood's "Life," "that Art, no less than other spheres of life, had its Heroes; that the mainspring of their energy was Sincerity, and the burden of their utterance, Truth."

It was many years before Ruskin passed from the rôle of art-critic to that of social reformer and preacher, and there is no room in the limits of this tract to trace in detail the process of the evolution. But a cursory investigation is enough to show that it was by a natural course of development, and not by any sudden change of idea, that the author of the first volume of "Modern Painters" (1843) became the inspired prophet of "Unto this Last" (1860) and "Munera Pulveris" (1862). Because, not in spite of, his study of art, Ruskin was bound to grow into a student of sociology. The underlying principles of his teaching develop, but fundamentally they remain the same. The foundations of his creed, whether in art, in thought, in morals, or in sociology may be expressed in his own words: "Nothing can be beautiful which is not true." Sincerity is the foundation of all true art; honesty of purpose in the artist, truth and beauty in the thing portrayed; and to Ruskin, art, religion and morality are different only in so far as they reveal different aspects of the same thing. Hence "all great art is praise," that is to say, it is the result of the artist's instinctive reverence and delight in the beauty, which it is given him to see more truly and accurately than other men, and which it is his supreme mission to reveal to others. He sees more truly and must make others see too; he must be faithful to nature, representing with exactitude that which he perceives. But there is a spiritual as well as a physical perception,—the insight which pierces through externals to the essential truth that is beyond, and is the result of intuition, inspiration, enthusiasm and of all that is implied by the word "imagination." To Ruskin, as to other great critics of the nineteenth century, imagination is the interpreter, the power which transforms or transfigures reality, but without destroying the basis of ordinary perception. It does not change facts, but, by rendering them imaginatively, it forces them to yield something beyond themselves. It is this "putting the infinite within the finite" that differentiates art from "imitation," which can be only of the material.

Essential truth is, then, for ever inconsistent with imitation. "Ideas of truth are the foundation, and ideas of imitation the destruction of all art"; for, in the words of Goethe, "The *spirit* of the real is the true ideal." This being so, it is not difficult to understand how Ruskin came to connect morality with art: he



shows us the links between the two when he writes that art is an inspiration, "not a teachable or gainable thing, but the expression of the mind of a God-made great man"; and again, from a somewhat different angle, art "declares the perfectness and eternal beauty of the work of God, and tests all work of men by concurrence with or subjection to that." Art unites the real, the ideal, the moral and spiritual, and by this union it is serviceable to man. "All art which involves no reference to man is inferior or nugatory. And all art which involves misconception of man, or base thought of him, is in that degree false and base." In other words, art must be brought to the test of life, and is worthy, as all other work is worthy, when it is of use, though the kind of usefulness is of course quite different from that of the things which, as Ruskin says disdainfully, "only help us to exist." It is by presenting noble ideas nobly that art fulfils its function of service.

By criticism on these lines he justly claims that the distinctive character of his "essays on art is their bringing everything to a root in human passion and human hope." He holds that art exists for the service of man, and is greatest when its service is greatest; without this motive no true art can come into being.

A study of "Modern Painters," shows that Ruskin was early led to the belief that the nature of the work of art depends primarily on the character of the artist. Later, he came to the conviction that a nation's art is the expression of its life and character, the individual artist being moulded by his surroundings and by the age in which he lives, so that, if these be unclean, the resulting art will be, like Renaissance architecture, decadent and unpure. Thus, he writes in "On the Old Road" (§ 276): "Let a nation be healthy, happy, pure in its enjoyments, brave in its acts and broad in its affections, and its art will spring round and within it as freely as the foam from a fountain; but let the springs of its life be impure and its course polluted, and you will not get the bright spray by treatises on the mathematical structure of bubbles." And again, in "Lectures on Art" (§ 27): "The art of any country *is the exponent of its social and political virtues*. . . . The art or general productive and formative energy of any country is an exact exponent of its ethical life." From this position there was no very startling transition to the famous chapter "On the Nature of Gothic" in "Stones of Venice" (1851-3), which contains in embryo all his later sociological and economic teaching. From teaching art and from the promotion of culture, both ethical and intellectual, Ruskin passed to the final phase of his life-work, and that which he considered by far the most vital.

### Ruskin's Later Life and Work as Practical Reformer.

In the years which had elapsed since his graduation as M.A., and his subsequent settlement with his parents at Denmark Hill in 1843, Ruskin had succeeded, in spite of violent opposition, in establishing himself as the leading critic and exponent of painting and architecture.

A series of provocative and brilliant volumes\* had gained him this position; his defence of the Pre-Raphaelites had won for him the affection of Rossetti (whom he helped in a characteristically quixotic fashion), Millais, and their circle, while of the older men, Turner, Carlyle, and Browning were among his friends. Lastly, he had secured devoted adherents among his pupils and fellow-teachers at the Working Men's College; while his own old College had recognized his achievements by the award of an honorary studentship of Christ Church in 1858. Thus, though his marriage had been brief and unhappy (1848-1854), and his private disappointments many; though his violent assertion of his opinions had aroused enmity and detraction, it nevertheless seemed by this time that he had outlived the period of storm and stress, and might look forward to a future of happy and successful work as an art-critic. But from 1860 onwards, that is, from the time when the last volume of "Modern Painters" was published, he no longer made art his main theme. Art he believed to be the outcome of a true and elevated national life, and he had been forced to realise that English national life was neither pure nor elevated. Social evils went too deep for philanthropic tinkering, and he therefore set himself to plan a complete scheme for social reorganisation. This scheme, unfortunately never systematically developed, has as its leading feature the banishment of utilitarianism and materialism, for which it substitutes the beauty which is also justice and truth. It insists that there is no necessary antagonism between industry and art; that, on the contrary, both are indispensable elements of the social organism, though they can be combined in various ways in order to fulfil various functions. But unless work is beautiful, it is not true work, and unless the life, even of the humblest worker, is beautiful, it is not a true life.

It is difficult to speak quite dispassionately and temperately about this last development of Ruskin's teaching; difficult, too, to realise what was entailed by his change of plan. For years, he had struggled single-handed, against enormous odds, in his endeavour to revivify English thought about art, and to overcome its insincerity and conventionality. Now, when any success he could desire seemed within his grasp, he came to realise that his most important work was still before him, and the battle still to wage. Never for a moment did he flinch or hesitate. He allowed his books on art to run out of print, that attention might be concentrated on the new message he had to deliver; while he withdrew into the solitude of the seer and prophet, upon whom are laid the burden and the consciousness of a great mission. "The loneliness is very great," he cried; "I am . . . tormented between the longing for rest and lovely life, and the sense of this terrific call of human crime for resistance and of human misery for help, though it seems to me as

\* Of these, the chief are: "Modern Painters," five vols., 1843-1860; "Seven Lamps of Architecture," 1848-9; "Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds," 1851; "Stones of Venice," 1851-3; "Lectures on Architecture and Painting," 1853-4; "The Political Economy of Art," 1857; "The Two Paths," 1859.

the voice of a river of blood which can but sweep me down in the midst of its black clots, helpless."

It is not necessary to dwell in much detail on the outward circumstances of the remaining years of Ruskin's life. His father, who had loyally endeavoured to understand his vagaries in art, was bitterly distressed by his heresy in economics, while his mother was wholly out of sympathy with his falling away from religious orthodoxy. At home, as abroad, he had to submit to misunderstanding.

From his parents, Ruskin inherited £157,000 in money, as well as houses and land. The whole of this property he expended during his life-time upon the promotion of reforms in which he was interested, while he lived for many years solely upon the proceeds of his books. Much of his money went to the foundation of the St. George's Guild, which was intended to prove the possibility of uncommercial prosperity in a society contented to get its "food . . . out of the ground and happiness out of honesty." (See "Fors," Letter LVIII, for the creed of the Guild). What it did prove was Ruskin's lack of success in the management of men and of detailed and complicated business affairs.

Again, he gave liberally to many individuals, educating promising young artists, or subsidising craftsmen and their crafts; he founded and arranged a model museum at Sheffield; gave pictures to the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge; established a drawing-school at Oxford; and bestowed collections of drawings and of minerals on museums, colleges, and schools.

His belief that all children should be taught to draw, as a means of training eye and hand and mind; his pioneer work in founding the Art for Schools Association; and his sympathy with the education of women, are other instances of his practical wisdom. Similarly, his suggested reforms in education, which are founded on the assumption that every child has the right to be properly housed, clothed, fed, trained, and taught until it reaches years of discretion, are for the most part now generally accepted, at any rate in theory. Ruskin was, for example, the pioneer of technical education in England; and even his road-making experiment with the Oxford undergraduates, which brought him so much ridicule, was the result of a sound educational ideal.

Ruskin also spent much time and money on sociological innovations, which have since been generally approved and imitated. For instance, he gave Miss Octavia Hill the means to manage house-property by a system of helping the tenants to help themselves. In pursuit of this aim he himself became a slum-landlord. Moreover, he never ceased his demand for the provision of decent accommodation for the working classes, though his agitation for housing reform made him many enemies. Another of his enterprises was the establishment of a model tea-shop; yet another, a scheme for the organised relief of unemployment and for the training of the unemployable.

Indeed, it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that almost every modern measure of social improvement may, either directly or

organised relief of unemployment.



indirectly, trace its origin to the precepts and example of John Ruskin.\* Thus, nothing can be more fallacious than to regard him as merely capricious and fanciful in matters of practice, or to forget his proposals for definite schemes of social regeneration, because he blinds us with the lightning of his zeal, or deafens us with his moral fulminations.

"He was like the living conscience of the modern world," says Sir E. T. Cook, his editor; and his health, never robust, was eventually undermined by the strain of his exertions and disappointments. The last twenty-five years of his life were clouded by frequently recurring attacks of illness, which sapped his powers and added to the misery of private grief and mental overstrain. The first grave collapse occurred in 1878, and soon afterwards he resigned his Oxford professorship (1870-1879) and retired to the peace of Brantwood on Lake Coniston. The retirement was not absolute: he wrote much and gave many lectures during the ensuing ten years, and from 1883-1884 he was even well enough to return to Oxford; while as late as 1888 he went once more abroad—his farewell journey to France and Switzerland and Italy. But from that date onwards until the end he was in a state of mental decay, when "his best hours were hours of feebleness and depression." Death released him on January 22nd, 1900, and he lies buried, as he wished, in Coniston churchyard.

When, in 1860, Ruskin ceased to devote himself to pure art, and turned instead to the problems of sociology, when he abandoned the search for abstract beauty, in order that a little more beauty might be brought into unlovely human lives, then by that sacrifice of inclination and of popularity he enrolled himself among the lonely thinkers whose message is not accepted by their own generation, and whose lot in this world is aching disappointment. Ruskin had tasted the joys of popularity and friendship; he had known the smoothness of a life of wealth and ease; above all, he possessed the artistic and poetic gifts which made the strife of the arena particularly hateful to him, and rendered him peculiarly sensitive to harsh criticism. These facts give the measure of his sacrifice and of his faith. They explain, too, the emotional strength of his social criticism, and of his demand for social regeneration. It was no Utopian dreamer, no armchair-philosopher, who proclaimed insistently the old truth that whosoever will save his life shall lose it. This man had made the supreme offering, and he spoke from the certainty of his experience.

### **The Meaning of "Wealth."**

The warmth of Ruskin's pleading misled the so-called practical men of his generation, who accused him of unlawfully confusing sentiment with business. But passionate earnestness is not necess-

\* "National Education, National Hygiene, National Dealing with the Housing of the Poor, even National Succour for those who fall by the way in the toilsome march of the Army of Labour, National Dealing with Land, National Dealing with Trade, with Colonisation, with all the real National Interests—all these measures, so long denounced without distinction by the old sham political economy of the past, he advocated, and now they are within or at our doors."—YORK POWELL.

arily fanaticism, nor does burning hatred of wrong inevitably lead to distortion or even exaggeration of fact. To apply everywhere and always the test of humanity and of life, rather than the test of money-gain, may, even from the commercial standpoint, in the long-run be the most profitable course. Certainly, if Ruskin's standard be the right one, if "the essence of wealth is in its power over man, and the grandeur of wealth is to make men better and happier," then it may reasonably be accepted "that the final outcome and consummation of all wealth is in the producing as many as possible full-breathed, bright-eyed and happy-hearted human creatures." The most hard-headed business man cannot, at any rate, controvert the next statement: "Our modern wealth, I think, has rather a tendency the other way; most political economists appearing to consider multitudes of human creatures not conducive to wealth, or at least conducive to it only by remaining in a dim-eyed and narrow-chested state of being."

It is not easy to formulate a systematic body of sociological teaching from Ruskin's writings, for he never arranged his doctrines with scientific clearness and logical consistency. Yet the underlying principles are, as we have seen, laid down with perfect simplicity. His political economy is founded on the conviction that "there is no wealth but life—life including all its powers of love, of joy and of admiration. That country is the richest which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings." Those who deal with the science of mere getting and spending, who conceive of "wealth" as mere material possession, have no just claim to be called political economists. At best, they are interested only in a science of avarice, a mercantile economy, which ignores human welfare and has no right to arrogate to itself the title "political," i.e., belonging to the citizens who form the State. At worst, their teaching is wrong, even in so far as it deals with buying and selling, since it deliberately starts from the false premise that men are moved, permanently and essentially, by nothing but their desire for material gain.

Now Ruskin interprets life always in terms of humanity, and is consequently impervious to arguments which postulate an "economic man," "a covetous machine," in whom "the social affections are accidental and disturbing elements." On the contrary, he proclaims, in the words of Wordsworth, that "We live by admiration, hope and love," and that it is for ever unsound and unscientific to ignore these permanent attributes of human nature. The individual cannot separate his work from his human feelings on the one hand, or from his physical capacities and desires on the other. What is true of the individual is true also of society, which is made up of individuals, and cannot, therefore, satisfactorily be regarded as an abstract theoretical entity. Any competition or money-grabbing that injures the individual, at the same time reacts against the State and is opposed to civic and social welfare.

Again, things which cannot be bought and sold in the market-place—e.g., love, friendship, self-sacrifice, capacity, truth—do never-

theless, and must inevitably, have a very real influence even on supply and demand. Ruskin shows for instance, in an unforgettable paragraph in the first chapter of "Unto this Last," that "all right relations between master and operative and all their best interests ultimately depend" on the "balances of justice, meaning in the term justice to include affection—such affection as one man *owes* another." Since a workman is not a machine who is moved by steam "or any other agent of calculable force," but "an engine whose motive power is a Soul," it is obviously impossible to deal with him as if the so-called economic man were separable from the emotional man. Even from the lowest point of view, the greatest material result of his work will be obtained if he serves his master gladly, i.e., if his "soul" enters into his work. To treat him as a machine, as something less than a man, is to lower the economic worth of his work, which is best done when, valued and valuable for its own sake, a blessing and not a curse, it calls into activity all the noblest human energies and emotions. (This argument does not apply to purely mechanical operations. But these, Ruskin would, precisely on this ground, reduce to a minimum, as tending to the destruction of the real wealth, which is life and has no relation to market-value.) It must be admitted that, if this be sentiment, it is sentiment of a very practical, reasonable kind. Similarly, it is illogical and misleading to make a science of industrial wealth and to ignore "real wealth," i.e., human welfare in the widest and deepest interpretation. Thus the statement that "There is no wealth but life" is again a literal statement of fact, a common-sense doctrine which is intended for the plain business-man and not for the idealist. Wealth, according to Ruskin, does not depend on market-value; the worth of any object cannot be determined by the price that may be obtained for it; and on the other hand, as we have seen, many inestimably valuable things can neither be bought nor sold. "A thing is worth precisely what it can do for you, not what you choose to pay for it. . . . The thing is worth what it *can* do for you, not what you think it can." ("Queen of the Air," § 125.) Thus a miser, with hoards of money and jewels, is not really wealthy in any accurate sense of the term. His store benefits no one, himself least of all. Again, there is all the difference in the world between the value of a field of corn, and of a factory full of costly and death-dealing implements of war, or between a cheap edition of Shakespeare's works and an edition de luxe of the latest fashionable small poet: the corn is worth its weight in gold, Shakespeare's plays are priceless wealth—and the other things are not really valuable at all. For "there is no wealth but life"; wealth-giving things are those which "avail towards life." Whether we do or do not desire them, whether there is "demand" for them, does not affect their worth. A picture by Whistler is no more valuable now, when it fetches thousands in the auction-room, than when it first left the unknown artist's brush to be reviled by Ruskin. The worth, as distinct from the exchange-value, is not to be estimated by passing whims on the subject, nor by the price paid, but by the intrinsic power to be of



service if rightly used. So that the wealthy man is he who possesses useful things and also the power and capacity to use them: wealth is the "possession of the valuable by the valiant": "usefulness is value in the hands of the valiant" (or availing). Things which are desired for base purposes and which pander only to the lower nature, are "illth," not wealth, "causing devastation and trouble around them in all direction," having no *use* at all, since they avail not for life, but for death. Wealth promotes life and all the life-giving, wholesome desires which are natural to healthy men and women. "Perhaps it may even appear after some consideration that the persons themselves *are* the wealth."

The above argument of Ruskin is open to certain objections which have tended to obscure the essential truth of his contention. In the first place, as he says himself, though he does not always remember it, the potentiality for good, i.e., the "value" of anything depends invariably on the owner's capacity to use it. Certain things have no life-giving power, except under certain conditions of culture. For instance, the beads given to savages by travellers are, both actually and potentially, valueless; but Shakespeare's plays or Whistler's pictures would not give so much pleasure or produce equal effect. The *actual* worth does not vary, but the *effective* worth does. To that extent it is untrue that "evil and good are fixed . . . inherent, not dependent on opinion or choice." ("Modern Painters," § 33.) Ruskin states the case better when he writes that "a horse is no wealth to us if we cannot ride, nor a picture if we cannot see, nor can any noble thing be wealth, except to a noble person" ("Modern Painters," § 14, and cf. "Munera Pulveris," § 35.) Secondly, though Ruskin ignores the fact, even the potential value of things varies in inverse ratio to their quantity. Thus, in spite of its intrinsic, life-giving quality, corn becomes potentially useless if there is a glut of it, and already more bread available than can be consumed.

Even more misleading, though this is not altogether the fault of Ruskin, is the fact that, as we have seen, he refuses to use the term "value" in any current economic sense. Thus he implies by it, neither market-value, nor worth to an individual, but, almost invariably, "life-giving quality." Now the ordinary science of political economy is concerned very little with "wealth" as measured by any life-giving properties. It deals simply with demand and supply, that is, with what men actually want at any given moment, and the means of satisfying their desires. Ruskin, on the contrary, insists that every demand for commodities is, of necessity, a demand for life or for death—a demand, that is, for things both in themselves and in the nature of their production, either good or evil, promoting human welfare or human misery. Thus it makes a very real difference whether money is exchanged for shoddy cloth or for hand-woven material; for penny-dreadfuls or for the romances of Scott.

### The Meaning of "Political Economy."

Thus, Ruskin substitutes a human life-standard for a money-standard. Political economy, since it has to do with living men and

women, must treat them as such, and not as money-producing and money-spending and calculating machines. Here, as everywhere else, he bases his deductions on an ethical foundation—refusing to discuss theories which leave out of sight the fundamental factors of right human nature. What *is*, cannot be made a satisfactory starting-point for the determination of what ought to be: men do not always want what is best and most desirable, but a true scientific political economy must raise them up to worthy desires, not pander to their most degraded instincts and the brute desire to over-reach one another. It must, therefore, insist that “In true commerce, as in true preaching or true fighting, it is necessary to admit the idea of occasional loss . . . sixpences have to be lost as well as lives, under a sense of duty ; . . . the market may have its martyrdoms as well as the pulpit, and trade its heroisms as well as war.” The merchant’s business is to provide for life, and if necessary, like the members of the other great intellectual professions, to *die* for it ; his function is to provide for the nation, not merely to get profit for himself. “This stipend is a due and necessary adjunct, but not the object of his life,” if he be a true merchant. That object is, to produce the best commodity at the lowest possible price compatible with making himself responsible for the kind of life led by the numerous agents who necessarily work under his direction. For cheapness must not be obtained at the fatal cost of human lives or human character: the work required must be beneficial to the worker as to the consumer. In any commercial crisis, the merchant, like the captain of a ship, is bound to share the suffering with his men. Thus must he prove that he cares most for the state or commonwealth, and that he understands the real meaning of political economy, the economy of the “polis,” which, if it be true to its name, is a social and not an individual science.

### The Cost of Production and of Consumption.

Such being the case, Ruskin is careful to point out that “production does not consist in things laboriously made, but in things serviceably consumable: and the question for the nation is not how much labour it employs, but how much life it produces”—and life includes more than meat; it includes wisdom, virtue, salvation, the right and opportunity to be “holy, perfect, and pure.” “The presence of a wise population implies the search for felicity as well as for food.” Hence the authoritative command: “In all buying, consider, first, what condition of existence you cause in the producers of what you buy; secondly, whether the sum you have paid is just to the producer, and in due proportion, lodged in his hands; thirdly, to how much clear use, for food, knowledge, or joy, this that you have bought can be put; and fourthly, to whom and in what way it can be most speedily and serviceably distributed.”

If production consists in things serviceably consumable—tending to obtain and employ means of life—then, naturally, the use of the things produced is at least as important as their actual production. This leads Ruskin to a statement which is startlingly unlike that of

most political economists, viz., that "consumption is a far more difficult art than wise production. Twenty people can gain money for one who can use it; and the vital question, for individual and for nation, is never 'how much do they make?' but to what purpose do they spend?'" What has been done with the potential wealth that has been produced? If it has been hoarded up, not used, it has been wasted, and has never really become wealth at all. "The true home-question to every capitalist and to every nation is not, 'How many ploughs have you?' but 'Where are your furrows?'" Thus, "to use everything and to use it nobly" is the final object of political economy. "The essential work of the political economist is to determine what are in reality useful or life-giving things, and by what degrees and kinds of labour they are attainable and distributable." Wealth can be estimated only by discovering the remaining amount of utility and enjoyment—the life-giving properties—after the cost of production has been deducted. "Cost" is "the quantity of labour required" for production, and in so far as this implies loss of life to the worker, the worth of the work is diminished. When the cost includes the physical or spiritual degradation of the worker, then it can never be worth while to produce such goods, for no function of use or enjoyment which they fulfil suffices as a set-off to the harm committed in their manufacture. To produce such goods can never be "profitable." "Labour is the *suffering* in effort. . . . It is that quantity of our toil which we die in."

If, in such production, suffering outweighs the desirableness of the thing produced, then such labour is death-bringing—and "there is no wealth but life." It is wholly and eternally different from work and effort, the application of power (*opéra*); that, in its noblest form, whether in physical action or mental, intellectual striving, is pleasurable and recreative. "It does not matter how much *work* a thing needs to produce it; it matters only how much distress. Generally, the more the power it requires, the less the distress; so that the noblest works of man cost less than the meanest." Thus interpreted, work, as distinct from labour and suffering, is salutary and beneficial to the worker. Ruskin realises the impossibility of doing away with all unpleasurable labour, but at the same time he points out that its amount may be decreased in various ways.

### The Mechanisation and Division of Labour.

For instance, he shows that in manufacture the interest is diminished and the monotony, i.e., suffering, increased, when the worker continually carries out the same process without seeing any visible result of his labour. It is true that division of labour lowers the money-cost of many manufactured articles, but it is often soul-destroying to the producer. Less wages are obtained by the tailor who spends his life in stitching button-holes, than by the skilled workman who is capable of making the whole garment or any part of it. But to counterbalance the reduction of wages, it is necessary to remember the lowered standard of workmanship, and also the lessening of



power, efficiency, and well-being of the workman. It does not really "pay," even in the lowest sense, to degrade human skill and taste, and to decrease healthy interest in the work done. This fact, almost unrealised either by economists or employers when Ruskin first stated it, led him to condemn both machine-made goods and also that over-specialisation which is the tendency of modern life. Just as the artist's personal touch differentiates a picture from the best photograph ever taken, so, in lower kinds of creative work, the maker's individuality must be expressed if the thing made is to be, in the best sense, valuable. There is an eloquent passage in one of Ruskin's books, in which he explains that no two specimens of great Venetian glass ever were, or could be, exactly similar, though modern Venetians turn out vase after vase exactly to pattern. The moral he deduces is universally applicable—namely, that the human standard alone is the true test of efficiency. Machine-made things are inferior in quality, whatever the ease with which they can be produced; purely mechanical labour is inferior, though the wages required to command it be never so low.

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Hence, Ruskin's reintroduction of hand-loom weaving and handicrafts of every kind; hence, too, his tirades against steam power and steam engines. He hated them, because they necessitate all sorts of degrading labour in mines and in factories, and because, at the same time, they destroy the beauties of nature. For he believed "that a nation is only worthy of the soil and the scenes that it has inherited, when by all its acts and arts it is making them more lovely for its children."\* Moreover, since beautiful work can be produced only by people who have beautiful things about them, if the workers are surrounded by chimney-pots and smoke, their ears deafened by steam whistles, and their hearts saddened by a grey and dismal life of toil, they will create nothing which contains even the elements of beauty.†

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In spite of the common belief, Ruskin did not wish indiscriminately to destroy all railways and all factories, and very often his complaints against them were eminently reasonable and right, as when he objected to spoiling beautiful Swiss valleys by running trains through them for excursionists who were too lazy or too hurried to enjoy them wisely. He would have allowed railways only where their presence tended definitely to broaden men's minds and to facilitate the production of ideas; he would have subordinated them everywhere and always to the real "wealth" and "utility," which no money advantages can outweigh. Here, as everywhere, he applied the human instead of the commercial standard. This does not imply that he never exaggerated his complaints or went wrong in his condemnations. Much of what he said, for example, of hand-

\* Cf. "Lectures on Art," § 123: "Find places elsewhere than in England, or at least in otherwise unserviceable parts of England, for the establishment of manufactories needing the help of fire . . . reduce such manufactures to their lowest limit." And see "The Two Paths," §§ 89, 90.

† Love of beauty "is an essential part of all healthy human nature and . . . is itself wholly good—the direct adversary of envy, avarice, mean worldly care, and especially of cruelty."—"Lectures on Art," 111; and see *infra* §§ 25, 26.

weaving, was the result of imperfect knowledge. No life could well be more brutalising than that of an eighteenth century loom-worker; and in the same way, the lot of an agricultural labourer was not, from any point of view, more attractive in the days when the whole of his labour had to be accomplished by hand. But mistakes of this kind do not in reality detract from the truth of Ruskin's main contention, that the mechanisation of labour and of life is an evil which needs remedy, in so far as it destroys individuality and wholesome enjoyment in men's work and in their surroundings. As long as human skill and understanding are necessary in order to guide the machine, as long as man is its master, not its servant, so long may its use be justifiable. As soon as it is possible to put in raw material at one end to come out manufactured goods at the other, without any further attention than that which is purely a matter of routine, such as stoking or turning a handle, the workman deteriorates and the kind of labour is harmful. It cannot be right, for it is degrading to press a button and let the machine do the rest.\* The tests of wise work are, that "it must be honest, useful, and cheerful": work that ruins the worker can be none of these things. To be occupied solely with mechanical work is necessarily and inevitably to lose in individuality and in humanity—to sacrifice soul, the development of which is the most "leadingly lucrative" of national manufactures. When such labour is unavoidable, the hours of toil should be correspondingly short, in order that the workers may have ample time for recreation and for the development of their powers and sympathies.

### The Morality of Taste.

Moreover, from another point of view, mechanical work produces mechanical results which, as Ruskin has shown in much detail and in various places, are almost, if not quite, as bad for the consumer as for the producer, since they destroy taste. This brings us to one of Ruskin's most startling assertions, which is also one of the most vital elements in his teaching. He insists upon the *morality* of taste. "Good taste is essentially a moral quality . . . not only a part and an index of morality; it is the *only* morality. . . . Tell me what you like and I'll tell you what you are" ("Crown of Wild Olive," § 54); and again, "Good taste is the instantaneous preference of the noble thing to the ignoble." Happily, it may be acquired and developed, and not least by the influence of our surroundings, natural and artificial. But since the converse is equally true, a smoke-begrimed or ugly environment has a far-reaching influence for ill. For,

\* Cf. "Crown of Wild Olive," § 45: "What! you perhaps think, 'to waste the labour of men is not to kill them.' Is it not? . . . It is the slightest way of killing to stop a man's breath. Nay, the hunger, and the cold, and the whistling bullets—our love-messengers between nation and nation—have brought pleasant messages to many a man before now: orders of sweet release. . . . At the worst, you do but shorten his life, you do not corrupt his life. But if you put him to base labour, if you bind his thoughts, if you blind his eyes, if you blunt his hopes, if you steal his joys, if you stunt his body, and blast his soul, and at last leave him not so much as strength to reap the poor fruit of his degradation, but gather that for yourself, and dismiss him to the grave, when you have done with him . . . this you think is no waste, and no sin!"

"what we *like*" (or endure) "determines what we *are* and is the sign of what we are ; and to teach taste is inevitably to form character."

If Ruskin was right, it is small wonder that he protested against shoddy and machine-made goods, and against the ugliness of the modern industrial system and its productions. For to be satisfied with quantity instead of quality is a sign and precursor of worse evils which lurk behind. If we suppose, as he contended, that national taste be indeed the expression of national character, severe judgment must be passed not only on the Venetians, but on all nations who are content to exist without art or with inferior art. For they are proved incapable of delight, that is, in the true sense, uneducated, unable to be "glad justly." Yet enjoyment is a right which belongs to all in a well-ordered society,—a right sadly curtailed for most people under present economic conditions, when they are taught neither what to like nor how to like it.

Lack of taste results, too, in the wrong use of labour and the substitution of commercialism and competition for honest work.

### Competition and the Problem of Right Payment.

It is not too much to say that for commercial competition of all kinds Ruskin had an utter loathing. Thus his treatment of the wages-problem is unusually enlightened. At the beginning of "Unto this Last," he insists that the question of supply and demand ought not to affect the wages paid in one sort of work more than another. A doctor's fees, quite rightly, do not vary in accordance with the amount of illness at a given time. A cabman is not allowed to ask higher fares because it is raining and his services are much in demand. Nor, in a dry season, is he expected to accept less. All work is worth a certain wage and should, in Ruskin's opinion, be paid at a fixed rate, irrespective of other factors. Bad and good workmen, who are entrusted with the same task, should receive equal pay : in this respect Ruskin is entirely in accord with modern trade-unionism. A bad workman should not be allowed to undercut prices "and either take the place of the good, or force him by his competition to work for an inadequate sum." "The natural and right system respecting all labour is that it should be paid at a fixed rate, but the good workman employed and the bad workman unemployed." We do not choose our doctor because he is cheap—provided, that is, that we have money—but because we think him efficient. The same principle should be applied in choosing a bricklayer or any other worker. No other form of wage-competition is justifiable.

Again, it is infamous that a man's necessities should determine the amount he is paid for his work : he should be paid what it is worth—that amount, neither more nor less, he ought to have. Moreover, to cheapen labour is in every sense bad economy, since it results in bad workmanship and inferior workers. From the lowest point of view, it does not pay to keep men down to a barely living wage ; it is wise policy, even from a selfish standpoint, to let good workmen benefit from the increased goodness of their work.

When Ruskin advanced this theory it was laughed at, like so



much else which he stated almost for the first time. Nowadays practical business men are coming more and more to adopt what their predecessors termed a "sentimental" doctrine, which after all amounts to little more than that it is in the long-run more profitable to pay a higher wage to an efficient, than a lower wage to an inefficient workman. In this instance, as in many others, Ruskin's prophetic insight helps him to the vision of a very practical and far-reaching reform.

In spite of this, Ruskin later, in "Arrows of the Chace," II, 97, makes a claim which might lead to dangerous results. He is far ahead of his time in his demand that salaries shall be determined by a standard of life instead of by competition. He asks for a definitely prescribed, uniform income or wage for each type of worker, that is, as he defines it, "the quantity and kind of food and space of lodging . . . approximately necessary for the healthy life of a labourer in any given manufacture." Doubtless this is a better method of payment than that resulting from blind obedience to "supply and demand," since at least it secures a minimum of comfort to all workers, irrespective of competition. But Ruskin does not appear to recognise that this definitely prescribed, uniform wage might be a maximum as well as a minimum. It is not enough, as he himself implies in "Unto this Last," "Munera Pulveris" and elsewhere, that the workman shall be paid at a fixed wage. He has the right to raise his standard of life as the average product of his community increases in value; and he, as well as the capitalist-employer, ought to profit by industrial improvements.\*

Competitive industry is not merely bad policy in so far as the workers are concerned. Its ill effects are felt in every direction, and perhaps chiefly in that it lays the main stress on "profit" rather than on utility and good workmanship. For it is simply untrue that rivalry promotes excellence of manufacture. On the contrary, it causes that mechanisation of labour which results in the evils to which we have already referred,—the deterioration of the worker and the degradation of work by the production of cheap and nasty goods which are palmed off on the consumer, whenever he can be deceived, as equivalent to something better. Advertisements tell their own tale, and are a sure indication of the dangers of trade competition. Ruskin may overstate his case and ignore everything that can be said in favour of modern commerce. Certainly he makes no reference to the social qualities sometimes developed in the struggle for life—enterprise, industry and self-sacrifice for example, all of which qualify a man for service as well as for the attainment of personal ends. But he is right in recognising the moral and material waste which normally results from the system of fraud upon which trade, to a lamentable extent, depends; and in anathematising the selfishness of the struggle and the loss of power which result from individualism.

\* Compare his own assertion ("Time and Tide," § 8): "It is the merest insolence of selfishness to preach contentment to a labourer who gets thirty shillings a week, while we suppose an active and plotting covetousness to be meritorious in man who has three thousand a year."

### Ruskin's Views about Interest.

He is not equally incontrovertible in his attack on interest, which, in the latter part of his life, he denounces as indefensible. In his earlier writings he is content to condemn usury : in "Fors," and especially in Letter XVIII, he makes no distinction between this, which is rightly called extortion, and the interest on commercial capital. There is nothing surprising in the fact that Socialists accept his position, since they detest the capitalist system, which allows wealth to accumulate in the hands of the few and to be used for their personal advantage. For Socialists hold that all wealth should be created and expended for the common good, and that the conduct of the community's business for private profit is prejudicial to the body politic. But Ruskin never goes so far as this, though he advocates the increased ownership and control of industry by the State ("Time and Tide," § 81), and its organisation for social service. Consequently, his condemnation of reasonable interest on capital cannot be substantiated. He argues that interest is a forcible taxation or exaction of usury, adding that, since money cannot produce money, there is no sense in the claim that savings ought to be increased by interest. "Abstinence may, indeed, have its reward nevertheless ; but not by increase of what we abstain from, unless there be a law of growth for it unconnected with our abstinence." This is plausible, but unsound reasoning. It is easy enough to see the evil of usury, of profiting by the need of an individual, and losing all charity in the process. But if, as Ruskin rightly maintains, money consists merely of counters symbolising command of commodities and of labour, then the use of capital in production does result in an increase of the product, and investment of money in enterprises needing capital is a social service, for which (so long as there is not enough capital for its unlimited use) the consumer of the product may fairly be charged. So long as society relies, for obtaining capital, on its accumulation by individual owners, there is reason in this charge for its use, which is included in the price of the commodity.

Consequently there is an essential difference, in a capitalistic community, between reasonable interest on capital and the exaction of usury. A labour-basis of exchange and social service, instead of profit, are not feasible ideals until society has been reconstructed on a more satisfactory basis. And of this reconstruction, Ruskin refused to hear. He believed in a capitalistic society, and did not altogether condemn the private control of industry for individual profit ; as a result, his attacks on interest are unreasonably ferocious. Until industry is deliberately organised by the State for the common good, social saving is desirable, and, until borrowed capital is no longer needed for commercial enterprises, interest is both permissible and inevitable.

### Society is an Organic Whole.

While Ruskin refused to go the whole way towards the nationalisation of capital and of the means of production, yet the reforms he advocated tended always towards the promotion of economic

equality ; and he had a real horror of the unlawful accumulation of personal possessions. No one has ever more clearly recognised the fact that society is an organic whole, and that injury to an individual is therefore injury to the State. But he believed that industry could be saved from the slough of commercialism only by reforming individual capitalists and members of the ruling classes. He had a touching faith in the doctrine of *noblesse oblige*, but no hope of any reform that could come from the people and from democratic rule. In this we hold that he was doubly mistaken. However enlightened and virtuous the individual capitalist or manufacturer, it is, in the nature of things, impossible for him to revolutionise commercial conditions. Ruskin himself was forced to defend his own possession of money and acceptance of interest, by pointing out the indubitable fact that an individual can do no good, and probably will do much harm, by tilting, as an isolated Don Quixote, at the windmill of commercialism. Similarly, though Ruskin did not recognise the truth, an individual manufacturer or merchant would simply land himself in the bankruptcy-court, while benefiting nobody, were he, as an individual, to refuse to conform with the conventional conditions of trade. Individual efforts must be supplemented by social co-operation and State action ; similarly, the progress of all must come through all, that is, "the State" should be the expression of the whole of society, and not of any one section thereof.

It is strange that Ruskin failed to recognise this fact. He was hindered, as Carlyle had been hindered, by his acute realisation of the natural inequalities of men, both mental and moral. These convinced him that it was the duty of the strong man to govern, and of the ordinary man to reverence and obey his superiors. On the whole, it seemed to him that the existence of a powerful aristocracy was the safest form of government, since all social order must be built on authority. But the aristocracy he upheld was to be "the assured measure of some kind of worth (either strength of hand, or true wisdom of conduct, or imaginative gift)." Position was in no way to be purchasable with money, but to be obtainable only by superior intellect and energy. Hence he was conscious that, if ruin were to be arrested, there must be "repentance of that old aristocracy (hardly to be hoped), or the stern substitution of other aristocracy worthier than it." Yet in the very next sentence comes the startling and short-sighted admission : "Corrupt as it may be, it and its laws together, I would at this moment, if I could, fasten everyone of its institutions down with bands of iron, and trust for all progress and help against its tyranny simply to the patience and strength of private conduct."

Obedience may be, as he held, "an inherent, natural, and eternal inheritance of a large portion of the human race," but there is no duty of obedience to the laws of primogeniture, nor to mere wealth and social advantages. It is true, and no modern Socialist will deny the fact, that men's capacities differ along with their functions, and that equality among millions of individually developing units is as inconceivable as identity. There are, as Ruskin says, "unconquer-



able differences in the clay of the human creature." But this does not warrant any individual in using his unequal powers as a means of injuring or oppressing those who are inferior to him. Nor ought the State to permit him to use his superior capacity in such a way as to build up either riches or dominion. Moreover, equality of opportunity ought to be secured for each individual, and for this no man has more earnestly pleaded than Ruskin himself, who even stated, in so many words, that "this enormous difference in bodily and mental capacity has been mainly brought about by difference in occupation, and by direct maltreatment." Let every child have his chance, and the right spirit of reverence for superiority will not disappear: rather will it grow and develop in those who have no cause for envy or hatred, but only for the "admiration, hope and love" by which we live.

And, indeed, in "Time and Tide," Ruskin propounds a theory of government by co-operation and fellowship among nations, as among separate peoples, which is conceivable only in a world from which the evils of commercialism and tyranny have disappeared, and in which all men have been protected both from the unnatural inequalities born of oppression and from any misuse of the natural superiorities of others.

### The Nationalisation of Land.

Ruskin's opinions about the possession of land are in some respects remarkably modern, and although not identical with the latest Socialist doctrine on this question, they come surprisingly near to the view that land held by occupying owners for agricultural purposes belongs to the category of tools, and is therefore quite properly in individual ownership.

Ruskin is clear that land and water and air, "being the necessary sustenance of men's bodies and souls," must not be bought or sold. Yet he believes, up to a certain point, in the hereditary private possession of land by occupying owners, superintended by State overseers and paying a tax to the State as State tenants—the amount of land thus owned being strictly limited by the capacity to make good use of it. Apparently he has in mind a sort of peasant-proprietorship; in cases where larger tracts of land are granted in perpetuity to "great old families," "their income must in no wise be derived from the rent of it." Land must never become a source of income to such owners; its possession is a trust and "should be, on the whole, costly to them . . . made . . . exemplary in perfection of such agriculture as develops the happiest peasant-life." (See e.g. "Time and Tide." Letter XXIII.)

### The Organisation of Labour.

Perhaps he is most a pioneer in his demand for the complete organisation of labour and his belief in the right to work and to the best possible training and education for its accomplishment. His system of selecting the suitable worker for a particular job, and of utilising every potential labourer, is complete and satisfactory. Al

children are to be taught the laws of health, habits of gentleness and justice, and the calling by which they are to live. All those who are out of employment are to be received at once in government-schools or labour-colonies and set to such work as they can do, or trained for such work as they are fit. For the old and destitute, comfort and home are to be provided. "A labourer serves his country with his spade, just as a man in the middle ranks of life serves it with sword, pen or lancet. If the service be less, and, therefore, the wages during health less, then the reward when health is broken may be less, but not less honourable; and it ought to be quite as natural and straightforward a matter for a labourer to take his pension from his parish, because he has deserved well of his parish, as for a man in higher rank to take his pension from his country, because he has deserved well of his country." (Preface to "Unto this Last.") The case for old-age pensions has never been more trenchantly stated.

Lastly, he demands either government-workshops or trade guilds which shall set the standard of price and of workmanship for every commodity, "interfering no whit with private enterprise,"\* except in so far as their productions are "authoritatively good and exemplary." Ruskin's desire for some such guild system, self-governing in its constitution but vocational and voluntary in its composition, brings him nearer to the aspirations of Guild Socialism than to the achievements of Collectivism, but in any case, and in spite of his denials, his ideal is definitely Socialistic in its trend.

### The Results of Ruskin's Economic Teaching.

Omitting, as we must, within the limits of a tract, a more detailed description of Ruskin's actual plans, and ignoring his somewhat perverse attitude on the subject of a fully democratic suffrage, we are now in a position to summarise something of what Ruskin effected by his economic teaching, and to estimate his influence on the nascent Socialist movement of the second half of the nineteenth century.

In the first place, he justifies his claim that "honest production, just distribution, wise consumption" are the reforms that it is most necessary to enforce. For these reforms, radically instituted, would go far towards the establishment of what to-day still beckons to us as a far-off Utopia.

But more important than any particular means that he advocates, is his whole attitude towards social problems, and, indeed, towards life itself. Above all else, he acts as a stimulating power, a disturber of the vulgar modern complacency which he hated, an awakener of ideals, of higher motives and more generous resolves. Everywhere and always he applies the test of humanity; he breaks down the barriers which divide one human activity or instinct from another, and insists on the interrelation of all social and individual

\* It is interesting to note that the establishment of such government-workshops, as a means to secure a high standard of workmanship and to prevent or reduce adulteration, is an "original" panacea recently proposed by Mr. Emil Davies, who would, however, also use them as a method of obtaining additional revenue for the State.

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- P. GEDDES. "John Ruskin: Economist."  
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The works of Ruskin, which are mainly relevant, are :—

- "Stones of Venice." The chapter "On the Nature of Gothic." 1851.  
"Unto this Last." 1861.  
"Munera Fulveris." 1862.  
"The Crown of Wild Olive." 1866.  
"Time and Tide." 1867.  
"Fors Clavigera." 1871-81.

The standard library edition of Ruskin is that by Cook and Wedderburn. (Thirty-nine vols. 1903-12.) There are various cheaper editions, one at 1s. the volume, which includes all the above-mentioned works, except the last. This is obtainable in The Pocket Ruskin, in four volumes at 1s. 6d. each. The publishers are, in every case, Messrs. Allen & Unwin, Limited.



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